MOSCOW, March 25 (Reuter) - Russia on Saturday issued a strong protest at Estonia's deportation of an ethnic Russian political activist, Interfax news agency said.

It quoted a Foreign Ministry statement as saying the deportation on Friday of Pyotr Rozhok, an activist of Russian ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party, was a gross violation of his legal rights.

The statement accused Estonia of operating a state system of discrimination and of trying gradually to squeeze out non-Estonians.

"Now a dangerous precedent of trying to achieve this aim by force has been created," it said, adding it could not go without response by Russia.

Estonian police said on Friday they arrested Rozhok because he failed to comply with an order from the Citizenship and Migration Department to leave the country.

He was given 24 hours to leave, the Russians said.

Officials ordered his deportation after accusing him of undermining Estonia's fledgling constitution.

The Estonian citizenship department said on Friday Rozhok had attempted to hamper the restoration of Estonia's independence, secured from the former Soviet Union in 1991, and had made several anti-Semitic statements.

Rozhok appealed last month to a rally of the Russian Citizens Union in the Estonian town of Narva not to comply with a law obliging them to apply for residence permits, saying Estonia was ancient Russian territory, she said.

The issue of human rights violations in Estonia would be brought up in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other international bodies, Interfax quoted the Foreign Ministry statement as saying.

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